

Statement on Signing the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001

October 30, 2000

Today I have signed into law H.R. 4205, the "Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001," which authorizes FY 2001 appropriations for military activities of the Department of Defense (DOD), military construction, and defense activities of the Department of Energy (DOE). While I have concerns with several provisions in this Act, I have determined that H.R. 4205 generally reflects my strong commitment to the Nation's security. It provides for critical national defense needs and priorities, maintains the readiness of our Armed Forces, supports my continued commitment to improving the quality of life for our military personnel and their families, and allows for the modernization of our weapons systems.

In particular, this Act authorizes key elements of my plan to improve military compensation, including my request for a 3.7 percent across-the-board increase in basic pay for our Armed Forces. I am also pleased that the Act authorizes my request for increases in housing allowances, which will reduce servicemembers' out-of-pocket expenses. In providing service members with a supplemental subsistence allowance, H.R. 4205 begins to address the concern the Congress and I share with regard to servicemembers. In addition, the bill provides military retirees access to prescription drugs with low out-of-pocket costs, a significant benefit. I strongly support enactment of the Administration's prescription drug benefit for all Medicare retirees through the Medicare program. As prescription drugs play an increasingly important role in health care, it is imperative that our seniors have prescription drug coverage. Finally, the Act provides comprehensive health care coverage to military retirees over the age of 65. Although I am concerned that the Congress fails to deal fully with the high, long-term cost of this new benefit, I am pleased overall with the way the Act supports individuals, who dedicated so much to the service of our country.

I am also pleased that the Act supports my request for key programs to continue modernizing our military forces and reaffirms the \$60 billion in overall procurement funding I requested to meet the recommendation of the

1997 Quadrennial Defense Review. I am encouraged that the Act includes funding for the Navy's LPD-17 Amphibious Ship, DD-21 (the next-generation destroyer), the F/A-18 E/F, the Air Force's F-22 tactical fighter aircraft, the Joint Strike Fighter, and support for the Army's transformation effort. These programs are critical to ensuring our Nation's military superiority into the 21st century. I am disappointed, however, that the Congress has again failed to support my proposal to authorize two additional rounds of base closure and realignment. The Department of Defense's base infrastructure is far too large for its military forces and must be reduced if the Department is to obtain adequate appropriations for readiness and modernization requirements during the next decade.

I am pleased that the bill includes a program to compensate individuals who have suffered disabling and potentially fatal illnesses as a result of their work in the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons complex. My Administration has advocated compensating these workers for their heroic sacrifices in a manner that is fair, science-based, and workable, and I commend those in the Congress and in my Administration who have worked tirelessly toward this goal. The passage of this legislation is very encouraging and, while there are constitutional concerns with this provision that I will interpret as advisory, I recognize that much work will need to be done to ensure that this program is successfully implemented so that these workers can be fully and fairly compensated for their sacrifices.

I am also pleased that the conferees included a provision transferring a majority of Naval Oil Shale Reserve No. 2 to the Ute Indian Tribe in Utah, and providing for cleanup of a former uranium mill tailings site near Moab, Utah, on the Colorado River. About 84,000 acres would be returned to the Ute Indian Tribe.

H.R. 4205 also enacts provisions of the Directives I issued regarding the Navy range on Vieques, Puerto Rico. The Directives reflect an agreement with the Government of Puerto Rico that meets local concerns and enables our military personnel to resume training at Vieques. Like the agreement, the Act, most importantly,

provides that the residents will determine through a referendum whether there will be any training at Vieques beyond that which is critical to the readiness of the Navy and the Marine Corps to conduct at Vieques. This is training with nonexplosive ordnance for no more than 90 days per year through May 1, 2003. In addition to \$40 million for projects to address the residents' current concerns related to the training, if they decide to allow the Navy to extend it, the Act authorizes \$50 million to provide benefits typically enjoyed by residents in the vicinity of important military installations.

The Act, additionally, requires the Navy to relinquish ownership of land not used for training. But, different from the agreement, it would have some of this land transferred to the Interior Department rather than local ownership and set a deadline for the transfer of May 1, 2001, rather than December 31, 2000. Further, if the Viequeses vote for all training to end, it requires the Navy to relinquish the land used for training, but would have most of that land transferred to Interior rather than the General Services Administration for disposal. These variations are relatively minor, but they are neither justifiable nor prudent. They are not justifiable because Interior and Puerto Rico would together manage the land not used for training that requires protection under either the Act or the agreement. Further, if the people of Vieques vote for all training to end May 1, 2003, there is no known reason why the Federal Government would want to continue to maintain most of the land used for training. The changes are not prudent because they resurrect a basic part of the issue that had largely been put to rest by the agreement—the military's credibility on Vieques community matters. We are, therefore, submitting legislation to further transfer the land at issue to Puerto Rican ownership or to GSA for disposal as is appropriate. And the Navy will transfer the land that the Act already would transfer to local ownership by December 31.

I am concerned with two provisions of H.R. 4205 relating to the Department of Energy. First, the Act would limit to 3 years the term of office for the first person appointed to the position of Under Secretary for Nuclear Security at the Department of Energy and would restrict the President's ability to remove that official to cases of "inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office." Particularly in light of the sensitive duties assigned to this officer in the area

of national security, I understand the phrase "neglect of duty" to include, among other things, a failure to comply with the lawful directives or policies of the President.

Second, I am deeply disappointed that the Congress has taken upon itself to set greatly increased polygraph requirements that are unrealistic in scope, impractical in execution, and that would be strongly counterproductive in their impact on our national security. The bill also micromanages the Secretary of Energy's authority to grant temporary waivers to the polygraph requirement in a potentially damaging way, by explicitly directing him not to consider the scientific vitality of DOE laboratories. This directs the Secretary not to do his job, since maintaining the scientific vitality of DOE national laboratories is essential to our national security and is one of the Secretary's most important responsibilities. I am therefore signing the bill with the understanding that it cannot supersede the Secretary's responsibility to fulfill his national security obligations.

I am disappointed that the Congress did not fund the chemical weapon destruction facility in Shchuch'ye, Russia. It is vital to U.S. security and nonproliferation interests to work with Russia to eliminate the 5,450 tons of modern, nerve agent munitions at this site. I urge the Congress to restore funding for this critical threat reduction program next year.

My Administration has worked hard to modernize our export controls and protect our national security while strengthening the global competitiveness of our high tech companies. Through our efforts, U.S. companies have been allowed to export computers that do not pose a threat to our national security. That is why I asked the Congress to reduce the congressional review period required from 180 to 30 days before I can adjust the notification threshold for high performance computer exports. Although the bill makes an adjustment that is an improvement from the status quo (60 days, but excluding time when the Congress has adjourned sine die), this notification period is still too long. Neither U.S. national security nor the global competitiveness of U.S. companies will be well served by such delays.

The Act also would require the Department of Defense to contract only with U.S. air carriers that participate in the Civil Reserve Air Fleet program for the transportation abroad of passengers and property. This provision would limit

the ability of the executive branch, including DOD, to use the narrow authority in current law to waive Fly America restrictions on international transport of U.S. Government passengers and property in cases where the United States receives "rights or benefits of similar magnitude." It could also impair the executive branch's ability to open foreign aviation markets, thus denying economic benefits to U.S. airlines, communities and consumers. My Administration strongly opposed this provision and favors its repeal.

I am disappointed that the conferees did not include hate crimes legislation in this Act. The hate crimes legislation would have enhanced the Federal Government's ability to prosecute violent crimes motivated by race, color, religion, or national origin, and would have authorized Federal prosecution of crimes motivated by a victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability. I will continue to fight for this important legislation, and urge Congress to enact it before it adjourns.

The Act also raises other constitutional concerns. The constitutional separation of powers does not allow for a single Member of Congress to direct executive branch officers to take specified action through means other than duly enacted legislation. Thus, I will instruct the Secretaries concerned to treat congressional members' requests for the review and determination of proposals for posthumous or honorary promotions or appointments as precatory rather than mandatory. Another provision establishes a Board of Governors for the Civil Air Patrol. Insofar as this Board is an office of the Federal Government exercising significant authority, the provision for the appointment of the Board's members would raise concerns under the Appointments Clause. Accordingly, I will instruct the Secretary of the Air Force, in issuing the regulations authorized by this provision, to retain a degree of control over the Board that appropriately limits its authority. Finally, because the Constitution vests in the President the authority and responsibility to conduct the foreign and diplomatic relations of the United States, the Congress cannot purport to direct the executive branch to enter into an agreement with another country, and thus I will treat such language as advisory only.

With respect to Government Information Security Reform, the Act directs the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to dele-

gate certain security policy and oversight authorities to the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and another agency head. The policies, programs, and procedures established by the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and other agency heads will remain subject to the approval of and oversight by the President and by offices within the Executive Office of the President in a manner consistent with existing law and policy.

Finally, I have serious concerns with several personnel provisions. One provision of this Act requires the Secretary of Defense to authorize a pilot program for the resolution of equal employment opportunity complaints of civilian employees of the Department of Defense that waives procedural requirements of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Eliminating these procedural safeguards could leave civilian employees without important means to ensure the protection of their civil rights. Therefore, I am directing the Secretary of Defense to personally approve any pilot program, and that the Secretary approve no more than 3 pilot programs, 1 in a military department and 2 in Defense agencies. In order to assure that participation by civilian employees is truly voluntary, I am directing that the pilots provide that complaining parties may opt out of participation in the pilot at any time. Finally, I am directing that the Secretary submit an assessment of the pilots, together with the underlying data, to the EEOC within 180 days of the completion of the 3-year pilot period.

I am also troubled by a provision affecting personnel demonstration projects that could undermine the merit system principles and might result in adverse budgetary consequences. I am, therefore, directing the Department of Defense to work with the Office of Personnel Management to resolve these issues before developing any plan to implement this new authority.

Notwithstanding these concerns, I have signed this Act because it demonstrates this Nation's commitment to the readiness and well-being of our Armed Forces and provides for a modernization effort that will ensure the acquisition of weapon systems with the technologies necessary to meet the challenges of this new century.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 30, 2000.

Oct. 30 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

NOTE: H.R. 4205, approved October 30, which incorporated the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 as an appendix, was assigned Public Law No. 106–398.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Rename the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act *October 30, 2000*

Today, I am very pleased to sign into law H.R. 5417, which would rename the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.”

I am deeply saddened by Representative Vento’s recent passing. Representative Vento was a great friend of the poor and the homeless. His leadership on the issue of homelessness will be greatly missed in Minnesota and across the Nation.

Representative Vento was a key leader in the effort to secure the original passage in 1987 of the McKinney Act, the first and still the most significant Federal program to assist homeless persons. His commitment to those left behind did not end with the passage of the homeless assistance bill. For over a decade he remained a leading voice for social justice on Capitol Hill, introducing legislation to expand and improve services to homeless people, and continually reminding his colleagues and the Amer-

ican people of our responsibility to our most vulnerable neighbors. Representative Vento was also a passionate advocate for affordable housing and protecting our Nation’s natural resources.

Bruce Vento’s passing represents a significant loss for Americans who care about ending homelessness, ensuring housing opportunity, and protecting the environment. Renaming the McKinney Act the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act will serve to regularly remind our Nation of Bruce Vento’s passion for justice and the responsibility we each have for our homeless neighbors.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 30, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 5417, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 106–400.

Statement on Signing the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 *October 30, 2000*

Today, I am pleased to sign into law S. 1809, the “Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000.” This legislation reauthorizes programs that support people with developmental disabilities and helps them achieve their maximum potential through increased self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration in all facets of life. The Act also adds important new authority to provide services and activities for families of individuals with developmental disabilities and the dedicated workers who assist them.

Since 1963, the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act has made a crucial difference in the lives and futures of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Through this Act, Federal funds support the development and operation of State Councils, Protection and Advocacy Systems, University Centers (formerly known as university affiliated programs), and projects of national significance. This crucial investment has provided the structure to assist people with developmental disabilities to pursue meaningful and productive